



## Critical auto jobs

LEFT OFF GOVERNMENT 'PRIORITY' LIST

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



I'm very disappointed the Federal Government has left auto trades off its Priority Migration Skilled Occupations List (PMSOL).

The PMSOL allows skilled migrants to enter Australia under sponsorship arrangements with employers needing labour. And let me tell you — we need labour.

VACC research shows a current skills gap of 31,140 automotive positions nationally. This is the highest skilled labour shortage for the automotive industry in Australia's history.

Fifty-two per cent of all automotive service and repair businesses nationally suffer from acute labour shortages — in regional areas it is 56.5 per cent. On average, it takes auto businesses six to nine months to fill skilled positions. That's just not good enough.

The skills shortage is affecting consumers, who now face unprecedented wait times for vehicle service and repair work, which could create unacceptable driving conditions on our roads.

The government has announced an additional 22 'priority' occupations, bringing the PMSOL to 41 positions. Not one is from the automotive industry.

The Federal Government says it engaged with small, medium and large employers, business leaders, and industry bodies across the economy to determine these changes. They didn't engage with the auto industry, and I want to know why.

The automotive industry employs 384,810 people nationally in positions that keep the country moving, enabling Australian businesses to survive and thrive. What could be more critical than that?

As a matter of urgency, the Federal Government needs to update its 'priority' list to include general and diesel motor mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, panel beaters and vehicle painters.

Australia could grind to a halt if it doesn't.

Prepared by Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce in the interest of better motoring.

Share your thoughts  
[ceo@vacc.com.au](mailto:ceo@vacc.com.au)



## TICK FOR CROSS-OVER

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTURING AT  
[CARS@NEWS.COM.AU](mailto:CARS@NEWS.COM.AU) OR  
PO BOX 2808, GPO SYDNEY, 2001

I loved my Toyota Corolla, but at 80 years old and with knee problems I found it too low to get in and out easily. We traded it for a Toyota Yaris Cross — the seat is higher and it's beautiful to drive.

June Archer, email

We journalists grumble about SUV saturation these days but it's clear their higher ride height is incredibly important to older drivers and those with mobility problems. I just wish there wasn't such a price premium for jacking a car up a few inches.

### FUTURE PLANNING

I recently bought a new car from a dealer whose aftersales service left a lot to be desired. I'm thinking of servicing it at a different dealer from the same brand but I'm concerned that when the car's out of warranty I would be less likely to get a goodwill repair if I service at a dealership I didn't buy from.

Robert Ettinger, email

I wouldn't have thought so, as the new dealer should be equally motivated to keep your business. If you want to make a request for a goodwill repair outside of warranty, I'd go direct to the brand's customer service department. They won't care which dealers you service with, only that you are within the network. You don't have to stick with a dealer who treats you poorly post-purchase.

### STAY OR GO?

We bought a new Honda CR-V in 2018. It was the dealer's 10th birthday so they offered a 10-year warranty: seven from the factory, three from the dealer. Now Honda has ended our dealer's franchise, Honda Australia naturally won't recognise the three-year dealer extension. Assuming our dealer moves to another brand, should we keep servicing with them or move to a new authorised dealer?

Tim Calver, email

You should check your sales paperwork, but I'd expect the fine print says you must continue servicing with that dealership — whatever brand it carries instead of Honda — to keep the three extra years. Typically, a dealer warranty isn't as generous as the factory one. Expect limits for each component. If the dealer's warranty says: "engine repairs up to \$1000" that'll barely make a dent in a replacement engine cost, for example. Stick with your dealer if you trust them.

### OUTBACK SAVIOURS

Re: Bob Hookway saying "good luck with a Land Rover in remote areas", his suggestion there's no backup for such vehicles is a furphy. Our Land Rover Discovery 4 tows our 3000kg GVM caravan with ease and we've never needed a recovery. There are always recovery businesses in remote places to get you to mechanical help.

David Drury, email

Fair point, but waiting for parts to arrive from Europe isn't a furphy.

### NOT SO SMART

My smart key's having trouble starting my 2012 Hyundai Elantra. The ignition start button won't work, except sometimes if I hold the smart key right against it. I've replaced the smart key's battery and checked the car's battery is healthy. The Hyundai dealer says they'll diagnose it at my expense. Could there be a computer chip error?

Chris Varty, email

Did the car come with a spare smart key? Use this (with a new battery) to see if the problem lies with your smart key or the car's sensors. If the spare works, take apart your original smart key and check for problems with battery terminal contacts or loose buttons. These can be repaired. Some smart keys can be reprogrammed — check the owner's manual to see if there are instructions. If not, go to a key specialist but there's a chance the car's receiver could be the problem.

### POOR RECEPTION

Our 2021 Volkswagen T-Cross suits all our needs but has a radio reception fault. The VW



### PETROL V HYBRID

New hybrid vehicles have long waiting lists, but the same petrol models are available immediately. I've compared the Toyota Camry petrol (\$26,490; 7.8L/100km) with the Hybrid version (\$30,490; 5.2L/100km). My calculations show at \$1.50 per litre, the Hybrid is \$3.90 cheaper to run per 100km. Considering the cars' purchase price difference, it'd take 102,600km to recoup the extra cost: about seven years driving for the average private owner, and by then batteries may need replacing.

Kevin Osborn, email

The Camry was revised recently and the combined economy figures are now 6.8L/100km (petrol) and 4.2L/100km (hybrid). Those figures are misleading, though, because they are biased towards country driving. In town, based on our experience, hybrids use roughly half the fuel of their petrol equivalents. On the city cycle, the new Camry's comparison is 9.3L/100km v 4.3L/100km. Hybrids also typically have better performance and the price difference is less for other Toyotas (it's only \$2000 more for a Corolla Hybrid). Batteries have a 10-year warranty.

dealer's been helpful but the issue's not been solved. There's static and reception is generally very poor listening to any radio station. It's worst with major commercial radio stations. This issue is not evident in our other car, a 2016 VW Passat. When using streaming services in the T-Cross there's no interference. Our dealer has advised several customers have reported the same issue. What may cause it and is VW Australia making attempts to solve it?

Bill and Ann Prior, email

A Volkswagen Australia spokesman told me: "there is no such issue extant." He said AM reception is typically poor in tunnels, between tall buildings or in remote areas. That doesn't explain why you have the issue in your T-Cross and not your Passat. Neither does it explain why your dealer has reported numerous other complaints. Sadly, the only solution is to digitally stream the radio station.

### FLAKY REASON

You suggested a Subaru owner's steering wheel damage was probably caused by hand sanitiser. Subaru's had faults with steering wheel coatings long before Covid arrived. We had ours replaced under warranty, as have many other owners.

Allan Brown, email

You're right, instances of flaking Subaru steering wheels have been seen for years. Although adding alcohol-based hand sanitisers certainly won't help matters.

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